The Deities of Gauri dasa Pandit
(a play taken from a lecture by Jayapataka Swami)
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Narrator: Gauri dasa Pandit was a great devotee of Lord Caitanya that lived near Navadwip in West Bengal. Lord Caitanya was very merciful to him by personally being present while Deities were being make for Gauri dasa Pandit to worship. These deities were very unusual and had many unique pastimes.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu: Gauri dasa Pandit, it is time for us to leave. We have been here much too long.

Nityananda Prabhu: Yes, We really must leave now.

Gauri dasa:: No you can't leave! Who will I talk to? Who will be my friend? If You leave than how will I be able to live? You have to stay here with me!

Caitanya Mahaprabhu: How can I stay? I have so many other devotees that I have to see. We can't stay here all the time.

Gauri dasa:: Well then, if You can't stay here, then I will have Deities made of You and Nityananda so that I can worship Them while You are gone. That will give me some happiness while You are away.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu: I can't Have Deities made in My presence! This is not my pastime.

Gauri dasa:: No! No! I don't care. Either You give me a set of Deities of You and Nitai, or You both stay here with me. I won't let You go. So You decide.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu: All right. How can I say no to My devotee?

Narrator: So, special Deities were carved for Gauri dasa right in the presence of Lord Caitanya. When they were done Caitanya Mahaprabhu approached Gauri dasa for his permission to leave.
(Actors for the Deities are standing on the alter when they open the curtain.)

Caitanya Mahaprabhu: All right, Gauri dasa, the Deities are ready now. It is time for us to go.

Gauri dasa: No, I've changed my mind.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu: (surprised) What do you mean,you've changed your mind?

Gauri dasa:: I've changed my mind. You must stay! You say that the Deities are nondifferent from You, so let the Deities go and

You and Nityananda Prabhu stay here with me. **(Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu look at each other and smile.)**

Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu: All right.
(Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu hold up their hands like the Deities and the Deities on the altar put their hands down and start walking away.)

Gauri dasa:: No! No! You're tricking me. Stop! Come back!

Deities: All right, we'll stay.
(The Deities put up Their arms and Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu put down Their arms and walk away.)

Gauri dasa: No, no- it's You Two I want! I'm sure of it!!

Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu: All right. We'll stay.
(They hold up Their hands and the Deities start walking off.)

Gauri dasa: (Running after the new Gaura and Nitai) No! No! You must stay here! You're tricking me! Don't leave me!!!
No! Let them go **(Pointing to the deities)**! You stay here with me.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu: All right.

Gauri dasa: No,no, come back. You go and You go! You stay and You stay!!

Narrator: This happens so many times that after a while Gauri dasa forgot which set was originally Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu and which ones were the Deities. Finally, in frustration,

Gauri dasa agrees to let Two leave.

Narrator: For many years, Gauri dasa Pandit very faithfully and devotedly worships his Gaura Nitai Deities. One year, around the time of Gaura Purnima, he had to leave for a while.

Gauri dasa:: Hridayananda, come here.
(Hridayananda comes in and offers his obeisances)

Gauri dasa:: Hridayananda, I must go away for a few days. I want you to take care of my Gaura Nitai Deities while I am gone.

Hridayananda: This is a great honor!. Thank you very much! I will be very careful with Their worship. (

Gauri dasa: I know I can trust you, because you are a pure devotee of Their Lordships. (Gauri dasa leaves.)

Hridayananda: I must be very careful in worshiping my spiritual master's Deities. Let me see, Lord Caitanya's birthday is very soon. We had better hold a huge festival for the pleasure of the

Deities. **(He thinks for a minute.)** We will need lots of prasadam to distribute. We can invite all the devotees of Lord Caitanya from the neighboring villages. I better make a list of what we will need. **(He walks off stage)**

Narrator: Hridayananda organized a huge festival. He ordered all kinds of vegetables, fruits, grains, milk, yogurt, and ghee. Many devotees were invited from neighboring villages and first-class arrangements were made for them.
(Hridayananda is organizing the festival, people are walking back and forth with bags of grain, and baskets of vegetables, and jugs of milk. Hridayananda is directing things as people ask him questions. Gauri dasa enters on the side and watches for a minute unseen by Hridayananda. In an angry mood he walks over to Hridayananda:)

Gauri dasa: What is going on here? Hridayananda, what is all this?

Hridayananda: (Hridayananda offers his obeisances to his guru.) We are getting ready for the Gaura Purnima festival!

Gauri dasa: You are having a festival and you didn't ask me? Without the permission of your guru, your spiritual master, you go ahead and have a festival? NO! You can't have this festival!

Hridayananda: (Very Humbly) Yes, Gurudeva.

Gauri dasa: Forget about this festival! Go and chant your japa by the Ganges!

Hridayananda: Yes, Gurudeva. **(He offers obeisances and goes to the side of the stage and sits and starts chanting. A produce seller enters. The man goes to Hridayananda who directs him to Gauri dasa.)**

Devotee 1: Where do these vegetables and grains go?

Gauri dasa: (Surprised) What? Vegetables and grains? Oh, I guess to the temple kitchen.

Devotee 2: Where does this milk go?

Gauri dasa:: Milk? I don't know. Put it over there **(points to where the last devotee put the produce.)**

Devotee 3: (comes in with a big burlap sack) Where does all this rice go? I have six more men with rice, too!

Gauri dasa:: That's quite a lot of rice! Take it to the temple kitchen, I guess.

Devotee 4: There are fifty devotees from the next village to the north, seventy five devotees from the village to the south, and one hundred and fifty devotees from the village across the Ganges that want to know where they will be staying during the festival.
Gauri dasa:: Oh dear, Hridayananda, come here right now!
(Hridayananda runs to his guru and offers obeisances.)

Gauri dasa:: All right, have your festival. There is so much produce- we have to use it up; and we wouldn't want to disappoint all these devotees!

Hridayananda: Jaya! Hari bol! **(Hridayananda starts directing everyone. Several more devotees have come in needing to know where to go.)**

Hridayananda: Prabhu, put this in the festival kitchen. This goes to the temple, that goes to the men's quarters. Can you get a group together to roll puris? Please make sure that the offering is on time.

Devotee 1: The offering is ready for the Deities now.
(Hridayananda goes over to Gauri dasa.)

Hridayananda: The offering is ready for your Gaura Nitai Deities now.

Gauri dasa: Good, bring it over while I get ready. Go and start the kirtan. **(Hridayananda brings the plate to Gauri dasa and Gauri dasa puts the offering plate on a table. He is standing so that he is not facing the Deities. He is doing achman and getting things ready. Hridayananda has gone to the other side of the stage and has started a kirtan with the devotees. While Gauri dasa has his back turned to the Deities, Caitanya and Nityananda look over to the kirtan and decide to join it. They sneak off the altar and join the kirtan, standing in the back. No one notices them. Gauri dasa turns around to put the plate on the altar and sees that the Deities are gone.)**

Gauri dasa:: Yaaaaa!!!! Where are Nitai Gaura??! Where are Nitai Gaura. They were just here! The Deities are gone! **(He runs to center stage)** Where are Nitai Gaura? NO!NO!NO! They are cheating me again. They've run off! **(He runs around looking for them behind some of the props. Finally he sees them with the devotees in the kirtan, dancing.)**

Gauri dasa:: There they are; They are trying to cheat me again!
(He picks up a stick and starts to chase them around the stage. Gaura Nitai look around and start to run, trying several times to hide.)

Gauri dasa:: Get back in the temple right now! Nitai Gaura, You don't cheat me, You get back in the temple right now!! Don't You run off like this!!!

(Nitai Gaura hide in Hridayananda's heart. To do this they hide behind some scenery. While Hridayananda has had his back turned in the kirtan he has taken out of shirt a big picture of Gaura Nitai on a red heart on a string around his neck.)

Gauri dasa:: There They are! They are hiding in your heart, Hridayananda!

Hridayananda: (Surprised) In my heart?! **(He looks at his chest, so does everyone else.)**

Gauri dasa:: Nitai Gaura are hiding in your heart! **(He walks over to Hridayananda shaking his stick.)** Get out of his heart immediately! Get back in the temple where You are supposed to be! **(Nityananda Prabhu and Caitanya Mahaprabhu leave Their hiding place and Hridayananda turns around so he can put the picture back in his shirt. Gauri dasa follows Gaura and Nitai onto the altar.)**

Gauri dasa: (yelling) You don't ever do that again! **(a bit softer:)** If you leave then I'll be friendless! I'll have no one to talk to, no one to offer prasadam to! You just can't go and run away like that! It is very disturbing!! **(Gaura Nitai stand back up on the altar like Deities. Gauri dasa puts the offering in front of them.)**

Gauri dasa: Now take your prasadam. It's getting cold! **(He closes the curtains and leaves.)** Hridayananda, come here. **(Hridayananda comes over, the other devotees follow.)**

From now on your name will be Hridayacaitanya because Lord Caitanya hid in your heart.

Devotees: Jaya! Hari bol!

Gauri dasa: And don't ever leave the Deities curtain open longer than a minute or two! I don't want Nitai Gaura getting attached to any other devotees and running off! Now,start the kirtan again!

KIRTAN.